



For Immediate Release
January 28, 2008
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Major Developments Add to Body of Evidence against Link between Vaccines and Autism

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A recently released court opinion and two scientific studies add to the already large body of evidence that shows there is no link between life-saving vaccines and autism. Vaccine advocates have hailed these developments and hope the new evidence will encourage parents everywhere to have their children immunized on time.

A case alleging that thimerosal-containing vaccines cause autism – the first of its kind to proceed in civil court – disqualified numerous witnesses supporting the contested theory. A Maryland judge issued his ruling on December 21, 2007, stating that the prosecutions' witnesses were not qualified to testify "by knowledge, skill, experience, training or education." In his written opinion, The Honorable Stuart R. Berger stated that "thimerosal in vaccines does not cause or contribute to neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism."

Dozens of rigorous, well-designed clinical studies show that there is no link between autism and vaccines. Adding to this robust evidence, the *Archives of General Psychiatry* published a major study on January 7, 2008 that found autism cases in California continued to climb after thimerosal was removed from routine childhood vaccines in 2001 (<http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/65/1/19>).

"This study should allay the fears of parents who may be confused by the abundance of false information disseminated on the internet and by print and television media," says Rosalynn Carter, Former First Lady of the United States and cofounder of Every Child By Two, a vaccine advocacy organization working to ensure children receive life-saving vaccines. "Unfounded allegations about the safety of vaccines could have dramatic negative consequences on the health of millions of innocent children. We trust the conclusions of the scientific community and will continue to raise awareness of the critical need for timely immunizations."

Focusing on vaccines distracts time and money from the goal of finding the true cause of autism, which researchers are steadily honing in on. On January 9, 2008, *The New England Journal of Medicine* published a study revealing that autism most likely begins very early in pregnancy due to a chromosomal abnormality (<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/NEJMoa075974>). The study was based on the most comprehensive DNA scan of families with autistic children ever performed.

“Immunizations are a medical miracle—they are the most powerful tools to control and potentially eliminate diseases that have caused morbidity and mortality for millions of people. Too many children, adolescents and adults in our country and worldwide continue to fall prey to deadly vaccine-preventable diseases each year,” cautions Paul Offit, M.D., Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and Director of the Vaccine Education Center at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

In order to help you navigate the science, the following experts are available to answer your questions about the studies as well as the controversial issue:

Peter Hotez, MD, PhD, FAAP

President, Sabin Vaccine Institute

Chair, Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Tropical Medicine

The George Washington University

Paul Offit, MD

Chief, Division of Infectious Diseases

Director, Vaccine Education Center

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Ari Brown, MD

Pediatrician, Capital Pediatric Group, Austin, Texas

Author, *Baby 411: Clear Answers and Smart Advice for your Baby's First Year*

To speak with Drs. Hotez, Offit or Brown, please contact Amy Pisani at (860) 443-1166 or via email at amyp@ecbt.org.

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Every Child By Two, the Rosalynn Carter/Betty Bumpers Campaign for Early Childhood Immunization, works to ensure that all children receive timely immunizations and continues to seek methods to institutionalize vaccine delivery and insure access to vaccines for all children. For more information, please visit www.ecbt.org